IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 3, 4, 12, 17, 18 and 20 are being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Original) An insulation plug for the die face of an extrusion die in an underwater pelletizer in which the die face is provided with a recess, said insulation plug including a rigid plate inserted into said recess in close fitting relationship thereto, said plate having at least one raised portion to form an air gap with said recess to reduce transfer of heat from the extrusion die and molten polymer being extruded therethrough into circulating water in said underwater pelletizer.

2. (Original) The insulation plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said plate is a solid one piece construction.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Canceled)

5. (Original) The insulation plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said rigid plate is made of a low heat conductive material.

6. (Original) The insulation plug as defined in claim 1, wherein said plate is circular with a central aperture, and including a retaining bolt extending through the aperture and into the extrusion die to secure said plate in said recess.

7. (Original) The insulation plug as defined in claim 6, wherein said aperture includes an inclined peripheral wall for

engagement by an inclined peripheral wall on a head of said retaining bolt.

8. (Original) In combination, an extrusion die for an underwater pelletizer, said extrusion die including a die face having a recess therein, a rigid insulating plate fitting closely in said recess and substantially completely filling the recess to prevent water circulating in the pelletizer from coming into heat exchange relation to the surface of the die plate recess, said plate having at least one raised portion to define at least one air gap with said recess.

9. (Original) The combination as defined in claim 8, wherein said insulating plate is made of a low heat conductive material which can withstand degradation by pellets and water.

10. (Original) The combination as defined in claim 8, wherein said recess has a bottom surface and a peripheral surface and said plate has an inner surface facing said recess bottom surface and a generally cylindrical side surface facing said recess peripheral surface and said raised portion being on said plate inner surface to engage said recess bottom surface.

11. (Original) The combination as defined in claim 10, wherein said generally cylindrical plate side surface also includes a raised portion in the form of a flange which engages said recess peripheral surface to define a second air gap in said recess.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) An underwater pelletizer which comprises an extrusion die in the form of a die plate having a die face provided with a central circular recess and orifices around its periphery through which molten polymer is extruded from said die face, said recess having a bottom surface and a generally cylindrical peripheral surface, a cutter hub supporting a plurality of cutter knives which cooperate with said die face to cut polymer strands extruded through said orifices into pellets, and a water box surrounding said cutter hub, cutter knives and die face to cool said extruded polymer and transport said polymer pellets away from said die face, and a rigid ~~circular~~ insulation plug ~~inserted into~~ generally filling said die face central recess and having an inner surface in ~~close fitting relationship thereto~~ contact with at least a portion of said recess bottom surface and having a generally cylindrical side wall surface in contact with at least a portion of said recess peripheral surface to reduce transfer of heat from the extrusion die and molten polymer being extruded therethrough into said circulating water in said water box.

14. (Currently Amended) The underwater pelletizer as defined in claim 13, wherein said insulation plug is a plate having generally parallel opposed surfaces, ~~and a peripheral side wall surface,~~ a raised flange formed on said ~~peripheral~~ side wall surface adjacent the face of the rigid plate that faces toward the cutter hub and knives to form a peripheral recess on said ~~peripheral~~ side wall surface adjacent the face of the solid plate facing the bottom

of the recess in the die plate, said flange engaging ~~an~~ said inner peripheral surface of the recess in the die plate thereby entrapping air between the recess in the solid plate and the insulation plug to enhance the insulating characteristics of the insulation plug.

15. (Currently Amended) The underwater pelletizer as defined in claim ~~14~~ 13, wherein said ~~plate~~ plug inner surface ~~facing the bottom of the die plate recess~~ includes at least one raised portion thereon to form an air gap between said ~~bottom facing plate~~ inner surface and said recess bottom surface to entrap air therebetween and enhance the insulating characteristics of the insulation plug.

16. (Currently Amended) The underwater pelletizer as defined in claim 13, wherein said rigid ~~circular~~ insulation plug is a solid one piece construction made of a material having low heat conductivity.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) The underwater pelletizer as defined in claim 13, wherein said insulation plug is a plate having substantially parallel opposed surfaces ~~and a peripheral sidewall surface and has~~ with a raised flange on one said parallel opposed surface adjacent an outer periphery thereof to form an air gap between said one opposed plate surface and [[a]] said bottom surface of said central recess.

20. (Canceled)